



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does CAIRS stand for?

“California All Incident Reporting System”, which is used to reference California’s NFIRS 5.0 data housed in the State’s data warehouse.

### What does NFIRS stand for?

“National Fire Incident Reporting System”, which has been designed as a tool for fire departments nationwide to report and maintain computerized records of fires and other fire department incidents in a uniform manner. NFIRS 5.0 was developed by the United States Fire Administration ([www.nfirs.fema.gov](http://www.nfirs.fema.gov)) in partnership with the National Fire Information Council (<http://www.nfic.org/>).

### Why should I report in NFIRS?

California law (Health and Safety Code 13110.5) mandates that each fire department operated by the state, a city, city and county, fire protection district, organized fire company, or other public or private entity which provides fire protection, shall furnish information and data to the Office of the State Fire Marshal relating to each fire which occurs within his or her area of jurisdiction. Using NFIRS 5.0 format enables the Fire Service to collect computerized records of fires and other fire department incidents to examine trends on a local, state and national level. The resulting information can be used to accurately budget and pursue strategic and organizational planning activities, such as training and risk reduction programs.

### How do I get started reporting in NFIRS?

California accepts data in NFIRS 5.0 compliant format. You’ll need to decide whether you’ll be using an NFIRS compliant **third-party vendor** or the Free **Federal Client Tool Software** offered by the United States Fire Administration.

**Choosing a third-party vendor:** To find a software vendor, we suggest that you check with other fire departments or organizations to find out what they are using and how well it works for them. Or you can go to <http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/system/activevendors.shtml> to visit the Federal list of active NFIRS software vendors. Up-front and extended costs for third-party vendor software vary depending on the package and the level of service provided. If your department already has an automated records management system (RMS), you may want to find out if your software has a built-in or compatible NFIRS 5.0 compliant component available.

**Free Federal Client Tool Software:** Information, registration, software and its user guides specific to the USFA NFIRS 5.0 software are available at [www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/](http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/). If you decide to use the Federal Client Tool to do your reporting, register under the user registration at [www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/](http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/).

After you register, it is necessary for **you to contact William Gordon, CAIRS Program Coordinator**, at [william.gordon@fire.ca.gov](mailto:william.gordon@fire.ca.gov) or by telephone at (916) 445-2891 to ensure your user account has been activated and to gain access to the NFIRS 5.0 software. *(Please note that activation of your user account after registration is not automatic; it is necessary for you to contact the CAIRS Program Coordinator, advising of your completed registration.)* After your user account has been activated, you will be able to log on under the User Login section at [www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/](http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/) to download and install the Federal Client Tool Software according to your database type. California departments using the Federal Client Tool Software are required to enter their incidents in the “**off line**” mode.

Contact William Gordon, CAIRS Program Coordinator, at (916) 445-2891 or email at [william.gordon@fire.ca.gov](mailto:william.gordon@fire.ca.gov) for more information.

### **What software should I use?**

That depends. The Free Federal Client Tool Software is completely functional, but it does not contain any special features that your department may need, such as an inspection module or a hydrant module. If your department already has an automated records management system (RMS), you may want to find out if your software has a built-in or compatible NFIRS 5.0 compliant component available. Or you can visit the Federal list of active NFIRS software vendors at <http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/system/activevendors.shtml>.

### **Where do I send my data?**

Your NFIRS 5.0 data should be submitted to the California State Fire Marshal's Office. Complete instructions for submitting your exported NFIRS 5.0 quarterly data are available at <http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/cairs/cairs.php>, under "NFIRS 5.0 Required Format". This includes instructions for naming your data files, due dates and methods of submitting your data, which include diskette, CD, zipped disk, or as an email attachment to [CAIRS@fire.ca.gov](mailto:CAIRS@fire.ca.gov). Email attachments should be less than 4MB in size (zip format, if necessary) to ensure receipt. Larger exported data files may be submitted via U. S. Mail to:

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Office of the State Fire Marshal  
Data Collection and Research Program  
P. O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

### **Will I receive confirmation that my data has been processed by the State?**

Yes. After your data submission has been processed, you will receive the validation reports created during importation of your data to the State's data warehouse. If your data submission was received via email, the validation reports will be returned via responding email; likewise, if submitted via U. S. Mail, the validation reports will be returned via U. S. Mail.

### **Who do I contact for help?**

You may direct any questions relating to the CAIRS Program to William Gordon, CAIRS Program Coordinator at [william.gordon@fire.ca.gov](mailto:william.gordon@fire.ca.gov) or by telephone at (916) 445-2891.

### **Can I get specialized statistical reports for my fire department, county or state?**

Yes. The statistical reports will be based on NFIRS 5.0 data that was submitted to the State and valid. Requests should be submitted to William Gordon, CAIRS Program Coordinator, at [william.gordon@fire.ca.gov](mailto:william.gordon@fire.ca.gov).

Statewide statistical NFIRS reports can be viewed at [http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/cairs/cairs\\_nfirsreports.php](http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/cairs/cairs_nfirsreports.php).

Statewide statistical CFIRS reports can be viewed at [http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/cairs/cairs\\_cfirsreports.php](http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/cairs/cairs_cfirsreports.php).

### **Our department received a Federal grant that requires NFIRS reporting. How do we get started?**

You'll need to decide whether you'll be using an NFIRS compliant **third-party vendor** or the Free **Federal Client Tool Software** offered by the United States Fire Administration.

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#### **Where can I get an NFIRS handbook?**

All documentation and guidelines (i.e., the USFA NFIRS 5.0 Complete Reference Guide, Data Entry Tool User Guide, System Administration Tool Guide and the Configuration Tool Guide) are available for download at: [www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/usersdocs.shtml](http://www.nfirs.fema.gov/users/usersdocs.shtml).

#### **My fire department needs an FDID to report in NFIRS. What is an FDID?**

“Fire Department Identification Database”. FDID numbers are issued to fire departments by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Office of the State Fire Marshal (SFM).

FDID numbers are the same five-digit number used for reporting data under the previous California Fire Incident Reporting System (CFIRS), which was discontinued on January 1, 2003.

#### **How do I get an FDID number assigned?**

If your department has never been assigned an FDID number in the past and is requesting such issuance, please follow the instructions available at: <http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/cairs/cairs.php>, under “Procedures for Requesting FDID Numbers”.

#### **My fire department information has changed. How do I update my fire department information?**

The SFM is dedicated to maintaining the most current information regarding fire department in the FDID Database. If there is a need to update your FDID information or your department has merged with another department, please notify the SFM by submitting the completed “Fire Department Information Change Notice”, available at <http://osfm.fire.ca.gov/cairs/cairs.php>.

Further information or questions regarding FDID number assignments can be directed to [william.gordon@fire.ca.gov](mailto:william.gordon@fire.ca.gov) or by telephone at (916) 445-2891.